



AN OPEN LETTER TO LAW FIRMS AND COMPANIES IN THE LEGAL TECH SECTOR

Re: Invitation To Participate In The TREC Legal Track For 2009

In support of the Text Retrieval Conference (TREC), we encourage legal community stakeholders, particularly e-discovery service providers, law firms, and corporate counsel to participate in the TREC Legal Track, an international research effort aimed at objectively modeling the e-discovery review process for the purpose of evaluating the efficacy of a wide range of search methodologies. Now in its fourth year, the TREC Legal Track will again this year feature a re-designed “Interactive” task, so as to encourage greater participation both by academia and by a broader range of the legal community.

The Interactive task design (which was based in part on principles from *The Sedona Conference® Best Practices Commentary on the Use of Search and Information Retrieval Methods in E-Discovery*¹), serves to model more accurately and completely the real-world conditions in which companies and law firms, and the e-discovery firms they engage, must meet their document-retrieval objectives and obligations. We therefore encourage e-discovery service providers as well as all interested parties with ties to the legal tech sector to participate in, and take advantage of, this important initiative. Also new this year: for the first time the TREC Legal Track will use a version of the public Enron data set as the testbed collection to be used by participants in the Interactive task. This is a change from the prior three years, where the Legal Track has based its research on tobacco-related documents found in the public Master Settlement Agreement database.

The TREC Legal Track was started in 2006 by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), an agency of the United States Department of Commerce, and in cooperation with the United States Department of Defense. The Legal Track is not designed to be a competition among industry players. Also, importantly, TREC is not focused on product testing and advertising claims based on or using TREC results are expressly not allowed. Rather, TREC is designed to bring together thought-leading representatives from government, academia, and industry to foster broad-scale, collaborative progress in the field of information retrieval, while serving to provide an objective evaluation framework -- based upon commonly-used metrics -- for various information retrieval methodologies applied to document review.

Among its important objectives, one stands out as particularly significant to members of the bench and bar. Namely, the TREC Legal Track represents the emergence of an important research platform: a credible, collaborative, and independent process and protocol by which both long-established and emerging search methods for document review may be evaluated and benchmarked.

¹ 8 *Sedona Conf. J.* 189 (2007), available at www.thesedonaconference.org.

For e-discovery service providers, law firms, and corporate counsel, participation in the TREC Legal Track offers an unprecedented opportunity to be at the forefront of an important movement to evaluate document review processes, create industry best practice standards and, in so doing, provide the legal community and their clients reliable information in the emerging field of large-scale document review and electronic discovery.

The Interactive task of the 2009 TREC Legal Track is scheduled to get under way shortly after Memorial Day, May 25, 2009, by which time all prospective participants should be “enrolled” by registering their intent with NIST. We encourage members of the legal community to go to the TREC Legal Track home page, read the Guidelines for the Interactive task, as well as additional information about how the Legal Track will be run this year, when posted, and to consider participation in this important initiative.

For more information about participation, see:

TREC Legal Track home page: <http://trec-legal.umiacs.umd.edu/>

NIST TREC Conference home page: <http://trec.nist.gov/>

NIST TREC FAQ: <http://trec.nist.gov/faq.html>

NIST TREC Legal Track FAQ: <http://trec-legal.umiacs.umd.edu> (forthcoming)

TREC 2009 Interactive Task Guidance: <http://trec-legal.umiacs.umd.edu/> (forthcoming)

To register intent to participate, please contact the TREC Program Manager, trec@nist.gov

For additional information, contact jason.baron@nara.gov, tel. 301.837.1499

Respectfully,

/s/ Richard G. Braman

Richard G. Braman, Executive Director, The Sedona Conference®
April 22, 2009

/s/ Kenneth J. Withers

Kenneth J. Withers, Director, Judicial Education and Content, The Sedona Conference®
April 22, 2009

/s/ Jason R. Baron

Jason R. Baron, TREC Legal Track Founding Coordinator; Steering Committee Member of The Sedona Conference® Working Group 1 & Editor-in-Chief of *The Sedona Conference® Best Practices Commentary on the Use of Search and Information Retrieval Methods in E-Discovery*
April 22, 2009

/s/ Ellen M. Voorhees

Ellen M. Voorhees, TREC Project Manager, National Institute of Standards and Technology
April 22, 2009